**Why has it proved to be difficult to build a revolutionary party in the UK?**

It could be argued that it is difficult to build a revolutionary party in the UK because of unfavourable political circumstances such as the influence of the role of reformism and the lack of a radical political consciousness within the working class. This aspect is obviously important and explains an important aspect of the difficulties involved in relation to the task of trying to build a revolutionary party based on the ideas of Marx, Lenin and Trotsky. But there are other reasons that are connected to the apparent inherent limitations of the influence of the role of the character of the party regime and the intolerant rejection of the importance of the development of democracy as the basis to organise the development of revolutionary Marxism. This problem is connected to the internal history of the various organisations that have claimed to represent the principled character of Marxism. Consequently, the history of the various Marxist parties is connected to the formation of a collection of authoritarian regimes and the resulting development of the tendency for splits and the generation of a process of fragmentation. This situation has meant that it has not been possible to develop a unified Marxist organisation that could act as an effective pole of attraction for the working class. Instead the situation has been characterised by the situation of the rivalry of a collection of small organisations that have been unable to become effective mass organisations with popular support. This problem has been an aspect of the history of the role of Trotskyist organisation. The result of this situation has been that the possibility to create a single and effective party that has been able to achieve the development of popular support of the working class has been undermined by this problem of the detrimental influence of the competition of many small and competing organisations. One of the aims of this article will be to try and establish how this problem can be overcome the creation of a single revolutionary party is achieved. In this manner it may be possible to establish the credibility of Marxism as a form of political organisation.

In the early 1940’s the forces of Trotskyism were essentially organised in a single party, the Revolutionary Communist party. This party was based on the leadership of Ted Grant, Jock Haston and Gerry Healy. But it was not possible to develop a situation of stability based on the acceptance of agreed perspectives concerning involvement in the Labour party. Instead this issue, and the necessity to develop a position on the role of Stalinism in Eastern Europe, led to differences between leaders who expressed an authoritarian type of temperament. This meant that the prospect of a split in order to achieve a situation of effective political harmony became inevitable. The precedent had become established that the character of Trotskyism became defined in terms of the premises of an authoritarian leadership that was defined by the justification of political intolerance and a rigid organisational regime. There were no major differences between Grant and Healy, but they could not work within the same group because of the increasing influence of a situation of personal rivalry. In this context a new group emerged led by Tony Cliff that promoted a distinct view of the character of the Soviet Union and which was opposed to the apparent acceptance by the leadership of the Fourth International of a stance that was based on an accommodation to a conception of the progressive role of Stalinism. In contrast the Grant and Healy groups seemed to uphold the prevailing approach of the Fourth International. But what had been established was that it was not possible to discuss theoretical and political issues in an amicable manner without the prospect of splits emerging. Instead the various groups in the UK were based on the monolithic acceptance of the politics of either Grant, Healy or Cliff. For example, it was not possible to discuss the issue of the class character of the USSR, and of Stalinism in general, without this question becoming reduced to the essence of the qualities of the various groups. This meant that the Grant group defined Eastern Europe as expressing the quality of deformed workers states before the Healy organisation and the Fourth International, and the Cliff organisation considered the USSR to be state capitalist. These differences concerning the evaluation of Stalinism meant that the possibility of the creation of a unified and single Marxist organisation was not realised under the situation of the justification of the expression of ideological and political uniformity. There was not the prospect of the formation of a single Marxist party based on the tolerant exchange of different political views in relation to theoretical issues. Instead the various groups became defined by the exclusive and individual viewpoints of the various leaders. The result was that the possibility of intellectual tolerance was not accepted as being an important aspect of what constituted Marxist politics. The precedent had been created for the possibility of splits in the future history of the various revolutionary organisations. But this problem was not recognised because each group considered that it represented the unique and exclusively authentic expression of what constituted revolutionary Marxism. The basis had been established for sectarianism to be the basis of the history of the various parties claiming to be part of the heritage of Trotskyism. This situation meant that the rival groups would be defined as being inherently opportunist or centrist and so the only organisation that could represent genuine Marxism was the specific party led by the exclusive revolutionary leadership. In this context the prospect of unity between the various Marxist groups would be rejected as being an expression of accommodation to opportunism. The result of this situation was the formation of many competing groups that could not become an effective revolutionary organisation because of this process of fragmentation. In contrast the Labour party seem to be more credible because it was a stable party that was able to continually attract mass support. Indeed, even the Stalinist Communist party seemed to be a model of stability and continuity when compared to the important divisions within the Trotskyist organisations. It would seem that the prospects of the various Trotskyist groups were not favourable because of the sectarian origins of their process of formation and development. However, opportunities within the class struggle were to create the possibilities to overcome the limitations of the legacy of this process of sectarian formation of the various Trotskyist organisations.

In the 1950’s the most important revolutionary organisation was the Socialist Labour League led by Gerry Healy. It had control of the youth section of the Labour party and was able to attract the support of important industrial militants and intellectuals. The Hungarian revolution of 1956 meant that it was able to appeal to many disaffected members of the Communist party. But the expulsion of the SLL from the Labour party created a crisis in relation to its organisational cohesion, and this situation was reinforced by its effective split with the Socialist Workers party of the USA which had provided intellectual and political leadership for the SLL within the context of the role of the International Committee of the Fourth International. The disorientation of the SLL was indicated by its inability to understand the process of structural assimilation of Cuba into the social character of the USSR, and instead they dogmatically insisted that it was still essentially a form of capitalism. Tim Wohlforth of the American group associated with the SLL attempted to overcome this theoretical limitation with his theory of structural assimilation, or the process of the incorporation of countries into the class content of the USSR, but this intellectual development was ignored by the leadership of the SLL. The SLL was able to establish its political credibility as the principled alternative to the opportunism of the Fourth International, but its credibility was undermined by the split of the Oxford section of the organisation in the early 1970’s. This split was led by the influential trade union militant Alan Thornett, who established the rival Workers Socialist League. The major response of the SLL was to become increasingly sectarian and based on the dictatorship of Gerry Healy. It became characterised by a process of philosophical mystification in terms of the promotion of the eccentric views on dialectical materialism of Gerry Healy. In contrast the WSL became increasingly influential in terms of its promotion of the demands of Trotsky’s transitional programme. This stance seemed to represent a promising expression of the interests of the class struggle as the basis to generate the significance of a revolutionary organisation. But this promise was not to be consistently realised because of the enduring problem of the importance of the authoritarian leaderships of the various organisations, as will be explained.

The Grant group took over the role of the SLL within the Labour Party Young Socialists. They established a newspaper in the mid 1960’s, the Militant which became the essential expression of the attitudes of the members of the LPYS. In other words, Militant became increasingly important because of its role within the LPYS, and on this basis it established increasing support and the ability to intervene within the Labour party. Hence the Grant group had been able to overcome its initial limitations of being a tiny group with a few supporters within Liverpool. But the problem was that Militant was obviously based on the authoritarian leadership of Ted Grant and Peter Taaffe. This meant it was not able to promote a democratic culture that could have enabled it to have become an effective expression of left-wing views within the Labour party. Instead it became an important sect that was based on an intellectual rigid approach, and the result was the formation of a monolithic grouping. But Militant was content with this situation because its important influence within the LPYS enabled it to develop the basis to become more significant within the Labour party. However, a crisis developed when the Labour party acted to expel Militant Supporters in the late 1980’s, and the LPYS was effectively disbanded. This situation could have led to a crisis for Militant, but the introduction of the Poll tax by the Tory government provided them with an opportunity to acquire popular influence within the class struggle. Militant acted to form Anti-Poll tax groups and its leadership of what was a genuine mass movement meant that it seemed to have become an effective expression of the ability to intervene in the class struggle in a genuine manner. This development was reinforced by the important role that Militant had in the struggles of Liverpool Council against the reactionary demands of the Tory government. But then Militant acting in terms of the gains of these developments made important mistakes that seemed to undermine the progress that had been made. The very success and advances of Militant in relation to the role of the Anti-Poll tax struggle encouraged Militant to make the important mistake of leaving the Labour Party and forming Scottish Militant Labour and then a similar organisation in England and Wales. This meant the possibility for Militant to act as the major left wing opposition within the Labour party to the policies of the right wing leadership was seriously undermined. The result of these developments was the self-imposed isolation of Militant and its effective decreasing influence within the political situation of the UK. This tactical development was opposed by Ted Grant and this difference led to a split within Militant which became an expression of the domination of Peter Taaffe. These developments meant that Militant ultimately became marginalised and this led to the demoralisation and sectarian decline of the organisation over a period of years. This situation was reinforced by numerous splits within its international organisation, and what was the influential organisation of Militant has been reduced to the role of a small sect. This development indicates that it was vital not to develop illusions of political grandeur because of the success of the Anti-Poll tax movement and that it was still necessary to continue work within the Labour party in order to create a situation in which the influence of the role of revolutionary Marxism could be the basis of the prospect of opposing the domination of the right wing expression of the influence of reformism. In this manner the views of Ted Grant were more realistic because he understood that the immediate success of the anti-Poll tax campaign should not become the justification of the rejection of the importance of the long-term role of developing the role of Marxism within the Labour party in order to facilitate the possibility to establish an alternative to the policies of right wing reformism. In this manner the actual success of the Anti-Poll tax campaign could have become the basis of the generation of the formation of a genuine expression of the possibility to challenge the domination of the politics of opportunism within the Labour party. Instead the very success of the anti-Poll tax campaign became the pretext to provide justification for the rejection of these tasks and instead became the basis to uphold the principle of organisational isolation from the Labour party. The result of this development was that the approach of Militant was based on illusions of grandeur about the importance of what had become an organisation that no longer had any direct connection with the major political party of the Labour movement. It could no longer act as an expression of opposition to the aims of the right wing of the Labour party. Instead Militant could only perpetuate its continuation in terms of the opportunist attempt to promote the possibility of its supporters to become trade union officials. In relation to actual developments within the class struggle it had decreasing influence, and the result was the demoralisation and decline of its organisation. This process of the increasing decline of Militant could have been avoided if it had been recognised that its very success in the Anti-Poll tax struggle, which had led to increasing support of the working class, could have become the basis to generate the increasing importance of the organisation within the Labour party. Instead the result of this situation was to justify what was actually a situation of sectarian isolation and this meant that Militant Labour became an increasingly bureaucratic formation that was not based on any expression of genuine democracy. The result of this development meant that Militant was unable to respond in a dynamic manner to events in the class struggle. Instead it became a party that was based on the elitist preoccupation with the promotion of its members to become officials within the trade unions. The gains made in the period of political work within the LPYS and the Labour party was completely undermined. This situation of decline led to the increasing crisis of the International organisation because the political wisdom of Taaffe became questioned by the various sections. The result was the regression of the various groups into becoming nothing more than organisations that no longer accepted the leadership of Militant Labour. In contrast, the rival Socialist Appeal led by Ted Grant was able to maintain a presence within the Labour party and was ultimately to create an impressive international organisation. The very consistency and integrity of Socialist Appeal meant that it had a durability which has enabled it to acquire increasing importance, but its initial small size meant that it could not equal the influence of Militant in the period of its peak political development.

The Socialist Labour League led by Gerry Healy was able to attract important intellectual support because of the crisis of Stalinism caused by the Hungarian revolution and 1956 and this development was connected to the influence of the organisation within the LPYS. It also was able to develop a rank and file movement of workers and trade unionists. The organisation was also able to provide principled opposition to the role of the opportunist decline of the American Socialist Workers party, and this meant the SLL became the effective leadership of the International Committee of the Fourth International. In this manner the SLL could provide a genuine alternative to the adaptation to Stalinism of the international organisation Led by Mandel and the American SWP. But the problem was that this approach was also characterised by dogmatism such as the failure to recognise and explain the social changes that had occurred within Cuba. This political limitation was an expression of the intellectual rigidity of the SLL, which was considered to be the justification of a principled standpoint. But the ultimate problem was the political regime of the SLL which became increasingly based on the individual domination of Gerry Healy. The lack of internal democracy led to the inevitable process of opposition within the SLL, and this led the Oxford based section of the organisation to rebel and to form an alternative group, the Workers Socialist League, which was based on an emphasis on the importance of the Transitional Programme. The SLL (which became the Workers Revolutionary Party) and the International Committee underwent a collection of increasing important disputes that led to the split in 1985. This led to the formation of a collection of rival groups with minimal influence in the class struggle. The history of the SLL and WRP was an indication that the justification of what was authoritarian leadership of an organisation, however formally charismatic, is not principled and instead can only result in dissent that has the increasingly inevitable dynamic of the possibility of splits and the formation of new groups. It could be argued that the SLL/WRP had some justification in its ability to be able to oppose the opportunism of the Fourth International, but this very principled development was undermined by the increasing importance of the bureaucratisation of the party organisation. This meant that a situation of political intolerance of the discussion of contrasting ideas could not thrive in the context of the justification of authoritarian dictatorship as the major principles defining the character of the SLL/WRP. This meant that the only people who become members of the WRP were those that were able to accept its doctrines in an uncritical manner and were prepared to carry out the arduous tasks of practical work for the organisation. In actuality the WRP became an organisation of activists led by a small intellectual elite and with a dictatorship for the party leadership. This situation was not sustainable in the long term and could only result in the possibility of splits. This process occurred with the split of the French section in the early 1970’s and then of what became the Workers Socialist League in 1974. The WRP learnt nothing from these experiences and instead developed in an increasingly authoritarian manner. This development could only create the possibility for more splits, as occurred in 1985. In other words, the WRP was effectively always a party of crisis because of the lack of democracy. The formal role of charismatic leadership could not undermine the limitations caused by elitism and the lack of intellectual freedom. Most people would not join the WRP because of its limitations and instead it only had appeal to those that had been convinced by its dogmatic claims to be the only genuine revolutionary party. But in actuality, Militant and the Socialist Workers party, were the more convincing expressions of what it meant to be the role of a genuine revolutionary party.

The Socialist Workers Party was possibly the most convincing expression of the possibilities to create a dynamic and effective revolutionary party. It originated on the basis of the elaboration of the theory of state capitalism in order to explain the character of the Soviet Union, which meant that in an effective manner the limitations of the conception of the USSR as a degenerated workers state was being opposed and tackled. But the problem was that what became the International socialist group was led by another authoritarian leader in terms of the role of Tony Cliff, who did not welcome criticism of his role as the major and dominating individual within this organisation. However, this aspect was glossed over by genuine discussion of the views of the group and the importance of other gifted intellectuals like Mike Kidron. The major advance of the International socialists in the 1960’s and early 1970’s was that they established rank and file groups of trade unionists who could advocate militant policies in order to generate support for the struggles of workers. But the major advance of what became the Socialist Workers party was the formation of the Anti-Nazi League which became an effective and popular expression of opposition to the influence of the fascist National Front. The success of this policy meant that the SWP became the most important organisation within the working class and was able to be more effective than its rivals such as Militant and the WRP. But to a serious extent the SWP was undermined by the challenges posed in the class struggle by the rise of the Thatcher government. The SWP adopted the apparently pessimistic perspective of the downturn which seemed to deny the possibility to make militant advances in the disputes of workers with the Conservative administration. This rigid perspective led to an effective situation of disorientation with the important miners strike of 1984 when the role of the SWP was limited to the defensive posture of opposition to any prospect of a general strike in order to win the dispute. This pessimistic approach was connected to an almost elitist rejection of any involvement in support for the strike because of the apparent dynamic of the limitations imposed by the downturn. The result was a form of sectarianism which contrasted with the involvement of other Marxist organisations in support of the strike. But the very defeat of the miners ultimately led to a new approach that despite the expression of what had become a genuine adverse balance of class forces the SWP announced the end of the downturn and acted in a subjective manner to promote the possibility of success of struggles that were occurring. In other words, the justification of dogma meant that the SWP seemed unable to understand the dynamics of the class struggle in an accurate manner. The result was the apparent inability of the SWP to intervene in the events of the various political developments with a credible perspective. They had underestimated the importance of the 1984 miners strike, and then seemed unable to recognise the adverse balance of class forces caused by the defeat of the miners. These apparent failures of political perspective were connected to the role of the autocratic leadership of Tony Cliff who was unable to respond to developments in a manner that would enable the SWP to intervene in the class struggle in a dynamic manner. Instead the approach of the SWP was based on an apparent indifference to the importance of providing a principled and audacious perspective in relation to the developments in the class struggle. Instead the SWP became the ultimate propagandist organisation that was unable to intervene in developments in a manner that indicated an ability to connect with the aspirations of workers in struggle. Instead in a bizarre manner they suggested that when an actual downturn occurred in the class struggle, the late 1980’s and early 1990’s was the period of the end of the downturn and as a result adopted more audacious perspectives. This was a classic indication of how party dogma was able to undermine the ability to understand political developments in a genuinely objective manner. The result of this situation was the increasing irrelevance of the SWP, but what had become a decline seemed to be ended by the events of the IRAQ war of 2003 which enabled the SWP to become the leadership of the STOP THE WAR movement. This meant the SWP had finally acquired the ability to connect to and lead a genuine process of struggle. But this very success did not overcome the tensions within the SWP leadership which led to the developments of a split and Lindsay German and John Rees left the organisation in order to create a rival group. This development was the beginning of the decline of the SWP which has become a small organisation with very few adherents.

The result of this situation is that the major Trotskyist organisations have not been able to maintain the aspects of development and success and instead have effectively become mini sects. The rival organisations like Socialist Organiser, the Workers Socialist League and Workers Power have also been undermined by the importance of political disputes and splits and so have not become genuine rival groups to the domination of the three major organisations. Only the Socialist Appeal led by Ted Grant, and then Alan Woods, has achieved some success in terms of its durability and ability to sustain the influence of Marxism both nationally and internationally. To some extent this is because of the ability of this organisation to generate an impressive collection of theoretical work on philosophy, politics and the history of Stalinism, and this has expressed the capacity to develop a distinctive expression of what is considered to be revolutionary Marxism. It is true that Tony Cliff has an impressive collection of books that he has written, but they tend to be about the history of Marxism, with his studies of Lenin and Trotsky. Hence it is questionable whether the SWP has been able to apply its understanding of Stalinism in order to grapple with the character of contemporary reality. For example, the theory of state capitalism seemed to have been limited in relation to the issue of a credible explanation of developments within the USSR and Stalinism in the period 1989-91. The view that state capitalism was replaced by the domination of private and global capitalism did not seem to explain the immense process of change that had occurred in the period of 1989-91 in Eastern Europe and the USSR. Instead the dogma of party orthodoxy seemed to deny the importance of the process of the end of bureaucratic regimes and their replacement by forms of capitalism. In other words, this situation was a classic instance in which the limitations of party ideology undermined the possibility to provide a classic and credible understanding of developments within social reality. Thus, the defence of an orthodox conception of social phenomena meant that it was not possible to outline a more credible and creative understanding of the process of changing events in relation to important developments like the transformation of Stalinism and the development of globalisation. The fact that the SWP understood the necessity to explain new events only indicated that their theoretical failures were more obvious and were an expression of the limitations of what had become dogma.

The implicit assumption of this article is that a single, united and democratic revolutionary Marxist party with credible perspectives could have become the basis to establish the development of a process of important interaction with the aspirations of the working class as expressed by the various mass struggles that occurred in the post-war period. This organisation could have developed an important expression of Marxism within the Labour party and provide leadership to oppose the offensive standpoint of Thatcherism in the 1980s. Indeed, to some extent this task was carried out by Militant with the formation of the Anti-Poll tax movement in the late 1980’s. But this primary necessity to create a united revolutionary party was undermined. This was primarily because of the authoritarian character of the major leaders of post-war Trotskyism. The various major personalities in the competing organisations effectively justified a situation of intellectual intolerance which was combined with the development of homogenous groups based on their rigid domination of what were effectively sects. The result was that in this unfavourable situation it was not possible to develop a broad and genuinely democratic Marxist party that could combine the advocacy of principled politics with the expression of intellectual freedom. Indeed, it is doubtful that this prospect has been genuinely realised because of the prevailing influence of the role of authoritarian leadership of the various groups. This situation has meant that the ability to express creative and unorthodox views means that people have to act from outside the party organisations. The expression of Marxist creativity means that individuals have to act on the basis of maintaining their independence from the various forms of Trotskyist orthodoxy. This does not mean that the revolutionary parties are not capable of creativity. For example, the SWP tendency developed the understanding of the USSR as a state capitalist society in a thoughtful and perceptive manner, but the point is that it was not possible for individual members of the SWP to be able to reject what had become the infallible orthodoxy of the organisation. This point could be made about all of the various parties. They were based on the acceptance of intellectual intolerance and so any dissenting voices had to effectively decide to leave the organisations to which they belonged and therefore form new rival parties. However, such developments did not resolve the problem of intellectual intolerance which was the basis of the justification of elite and omnipotent organisations. But the lack of inner party democracy and the tolerant acceptance of the necessity of dialogue between different ideas meant that the history of the various groups was characterised by a situation of the significance of omnipotent leaderships who then became challenged by factional opponents who aspired to create the conditions for the development of a process of renewal of the party. But this very process led to intense struggles about the politics of the organisation and this meant that splits became inevitable. But these developments did not resolve the problem because what was created were new monolithic groups with the latest generation of the role of intolerant leaderships. The realisation of the necessity of inner party democracy based on the principles of toleration of different ideas did not become created and so the crisis of the Marxist organisations was not resolved. What this situation ultimately meant was that the development of genuine dialogue between the working class and revolutionary Marxism did not occur, or at most occurred for limited and exceptional periods. Instead of such a possibility the preoccupations of the groups were internal or concerned with how to perpetuate and maintain the existing leadership of the various organisations. In this manner the Marxist conception of the crisis of leadership was primarily expressed by the various groups because of their justification of the domination of supposedly infallible cliques. There was no genuine prospect of the possibility of a process of renewal and transformation of the organisations in terms of the acceptance of new policies, perspectives and consistent determination to try and be relevant in relation to the concerns of working people. The result of this situation of rigidity meant that people constantly decided to leave the various groups, and so this development meant It could be suggested that there was an apparent failure to create a principled and democratic revolutionary organisation. The result of this situation meant that a dialogue between the working class and the Marxist groups never occurred except in the exceptional circumstances of the Anti-Poll Tax struggle led by Militant. But this was an exception that proved the rule.

It also has to be suggested that the political and organisational limitations of the various groups was expressed by theoretical dogmatism. This point can be indicated in relation to the understanding of the USSR. On the one hand the orthodox Trotskyist groups justified the conception of bureaucratic proletarian revolution in order to explain the formation of the societies of Eastern Europe, whilst the IS tradition could not recognise that capitalism had been overthrown in a bureaucratic manner even if deformed workers states were not created. The apparent rigidity on this issue was because the class character of the USSR was being defined in absolutist terms and the possibility to try and understand the novel aspects of the situation were minimised in favour of rigid definitions that excluded the possibility to define the USSR as a new type of bureaucratic class formation. Such a perspective was considered to be an expression of a lack of orthodoxy that could not be justified because of its novel and original character and association with apparently discredited figures like Max Shachtman. The result of this dogmatism was that the very character of revolutionary Marxism became defined in terms of adherence to rigid principles and theories, and so the aspiration to uphold a creative stance became defined in terms of the justification of an opportunist rejection of the aims of revolutionary Marxism. Ultimately the aims of principled politics became reduced to adherence to Trotsky’s transitional programme and the aim of creating a new form of International organisation. The result of this situation meant that there was a tendency to create a process of endless disputes about what was meant by a revolutionary programme, and each group would claim rigidly to be the exclusive creators of a principled international organisation. Such a situation could only be a recipe for continued splits and the development of new expressions of the only genuine and international revolutionary organisation. This situation would mean that the question of the essence of the revolutionary programme would be constantly scrutinised and the interpretations of rival groups would be subject to the most ruthless criticism.

In other words, the result of this situation could only be the generation of new types of organisation and the related adherence of them to what was considered to be the unique and exclusive expression of the essence of a revolutionary programme. (But some groups like the SWP would deny the importance of programme in favour of an empirical interpretation of the changing requirements of the class struggle). The result of this situation could only be the creation of increasingly smaller groups that would claim to have the unique and most principled interpretation of the programme. For example, the Workers Socialist League would claim to have the most authentic and principled interpretation of Trotsky’s transitional programme, whilst Workers Power would claim to have the more sophisticated interpretation of the programme in terms of their procedures of re-elaboration. But what this sectarianism concerning programme and perspectives meant was that the justification for continual splits became a constant feature of Trotskyist politics. The result of this situation meant that there was not the possibility to develop a single revolutionary group which could create a meaningful dialogue with the working class about the priorities and aims of the class struggle. Instead the groups became defined by their differences with the other organisations. Only in occasional terms could these limitations be transcended, as with the role of Militant in relation to the anti-Poll tax struggle. But the result of this sectarian rigidity meant that the reformist Labour party seemed to be the only possibility to express a viewpoint without organisational consequences. The result of the actual crisis of the Marxist Left meant that the Labour party continued to express an apparently credible alternative for political activity of the forces of revolutionary Marxism. But this possibility became undermined when the Blair led Labour party became a regressive expression of Neo-liberalism. But the effective crisis and limitations of the Marxist Left meant that they could not generate the development of a genuine alternative to Blairism. Instead the situation was characterised by the apparent failures of the Marxist left and its apparent continued decline into insignificance.

However, could it be argued that the major reason for the problems of revolutionary Marxism was its inability to establish a political connection with the aspirations of the working class? This question can only be answered in a definitive manner if there was one credible Marxist group that was able to attempt to relate its programme to the concerns of working people. But this possibility never developed because of the inherent sectarian rivalries of the various Marxist groups. This meant that such sectarianism was an important limitation that undermined the ability to develop a genuine and effective appeal for the support of the working class. To the general public it seemed that the Marxist groups were characterised by the situation of sectarian strife because of an inherent tendency to oppose each other in sectarian terms. The result of this development meant that it seemed that the Labour party was a more stable and credible political organisation for the working class to support. Only the Labour party could win elections, and in that manner express the interests of the working class. Only in exceptional conditions, as with the anti-Poll tax campaign did the politics of revolutionary groups acquire a temporary credibility. But in general terms the only manner in which the forces of Marxism could acquire importance would be in terms of the creation of a single organisation which was based on the right of the democratic expression of the views of its members. This aspect would not undermine the possibility to create a cohesive perspective and programme on which an appeal for support of the working class could be made. But the inherent authoritarianism of the various Marxist groups meant that this development did not occur. Instead there was a process of continual sectarian fragmentation between antagonistic organisations which meant that a unified revolutionary party could not be created. The result of this development was a process of fragmentation which meant that the aspirations of the forces of revolutionary Marxism did not seem credible. In this context there was no proper possibility to evaluate whether the aims of Marxism had genuine appeal for the working class because of this limitation of the various competing and sectarian organisations. In the period from 1945-2019 it has not been possible to create a credible Marxist group with a genuine appeal to the working class because of the various and serious sectarian limitations expressed by the antagonistic relations between the different organisations. This situation has been reinforced by the situation of authoritarianism that has defined the various party regimes of the Marxist parties.

However, this failure to build a genuine Marxist party in the past does not mean that such a possibility has to define the present. The very challenges posed by the reactionary degeneration of the Conservatives and the importance of the issue of BREXIT is an indication of the importance of developing a Marxist party in order to sustain the possible progressive project represented by the Corbyn leadership of the Labour party. But this development will be difficult because the various Marxist groups are still split and have declined into becoming small sects. So, at present there seems to be no alternative than to be critical supporters of the Corbyn project. But the point is that the aims of the Corbyn led Labour party may fail precisely because of the present limitations of the forces of revolutionary Marxism. Therefore, it is the tasks posed by the class struggle which indicate the continued necessity and importance to build a united revolutionary party. Of course, there is no guarantee that a united Marxist party would be successful in the conditions in which sectarianism has been overcome. But the point is that it has been sectarianism that has been the major reason why an effective Marxist party has not been created and so the development of a united party would facilitate the most favourable conditions in which it be possible to have an organisation that could make a potentially effective and popular appeal to the working class. However, there are no guarantees of political success because the ideological influence of the aims of the ruling class may still undermine the possibility to develop successful class struggle in relation to the role of the Marxist party. But the point is that unity cannot be a reactionary distraction in relation to establishing the required political organisation that is demanded by the requirements of the class struggle. Indeed, it can be argued that the creation of a unified revolutionary party could immensely advance the development of the class consciousness of the working class. In this situation the aim of socialism would no longer seem to be a dogmatic aspiration and instead would seem to acquire the genuine possibility of realisation.